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SITUATION REPORTS

POLAND

The government made little progress yesterday in trying to split striking workers in Gdansk by negotiating agreements with separate factory strike committees. [REDACTED]

This failure may account for the sudden replacement yesterday of the head of the regime's negotiating team. [REDACTED] the team's leader may have been ousted for conceding too many of the strikers' demands, particularly one that strike committees remain active until the trade union congress, which is slated for December. The change in chief negotiators suggests there are differing opinions within the party leadership on how much to compromise in meeting the strikers' demands. There are rumors that the party central committee will meet today or tomorrow; any serious differences could be addressed then. [REDACTED]

The new head of the government commission, Deputy Prime Minister and party Politburo member Mieczyslaw Jagielski, probably was selected because of his successful handling of worker grievances in Lublin in mid-July. [REDACTED]

The Church has showed that it is willing to take an active part in easing the situation. [REDACTED] the Bishop of Gdansk met recently with strike leaders and supported their fight for economic gains and human rights but also counseled them that lengthy strikes and bloodshed would harm the national welfare. As with Cardinal Wyszynski's statement that was publicized on Wednesday, the Bishop's remarks can be read as encouragement for strikers to go back to work. [REDACTED]

Gdansk Situation

Strike leaders are trying hard to prevent defections and to gain additional support. Workers from the Lenin

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shipyards, the center of strike activity, marched Wednesday on a neighboring shipyard which has refused to join them, but failed to win it over. The arrest of the 18 leading dissidents reportedly has served to harden the resolve of the strikers to demand that the government negotiate with the Unified Strike Committee. Dissidents, noting the movement of security forces to the coast, reportedly were printing and distributing leaflets to the forces explaining the strikes and urging them not to fire upon the strikers.

While most strike activity appears to be confined to the Baltic coast, several strikes have been reported elsewhere. Strikers at the large steel mill in the city of Nowa Huta reportedly raised political as well as wage demands during a two-day work stoppage earlier in the week but went back to work when their economic demands were met. Official Polish contacts [redacted] said that several other enterprises in Nowa Huta were on strike Thursday and that, as of Wednesday, three or four thousand Silesian coal miners had been on strike to demonstrate support for their colleagues in Gdansk. [redacted] labor unrest in Opole and Legnica provinces.

[redacted] rumors of an impending nationwide general strike; such rumors have frequently surfaced in times of trouble but have rarely proved accurate.

East German Reaction

[redacted] the East German party leadership considers the events in Poland to be very dangerous for East Germany and feels that the political demands of the striking Polish workers threaten the foundations of socialism in Poland. [redacted] the East German leadership believes other socialist countries also feel the situation is ominous.

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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

POLAND: The Prospects for Confrontation

The struggle in Poland has now reached a point where clashes between workers and security forces are a distinct possibility, especially in the port cities along the Baltic coast. Powerful forces of restraint, however, are still in evidence.

The influence of young militants, assisted by dissidents, on the joint strike committee appears to have increased. This leadership is now making economic and political demands that go well beyond redress of the initial grievances of the current industrial unrest.

The regime has no intention of accommodating the militants' political demands. It has made economic concessions, but as it has done so, the demands have escalated.

This process has maimed the austerity program, although the government insists that there is ultimately no alternative to it. The regime also has sought to isolate the militants by refusing to negotiate with the joint strike committee, disrupting telecommunications, and arresting dissidents who have been serving as information channels.

A Volatile Situation

The regime has made at least contingency preparations for any violence. Police units have been moved from Warsaw to Gdansk, and the Politburo member in charge of security forces is also there. Use of the security forces, however, and especially the military, runs the risks that these forces might not perform reliably and that any violence might spread beyond the regime's ability to control it.

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At the same time, the regime is attempting to wear down the workers with both threats and promises. It hopes that the militants' popular support will gradually evaporate from fear, fatigue, and a sense that as much as possible has been accomplished.

The staying power of the strikers will be importantly affected by the degree to which the Gierek regime can present a united front to the public, denying the militants' hope of exploiting leadership differences. Gierek starts from a strong point, having just earlier this year retired Poland's unpopular Premier and having exiled to East Germany the one Politburo member who was thought to be his most serious rival.

No ready alternative to Gierek's leadership appears to exist. Both Gierek and Premier Babiuch have publicly committed their prestige to the regime's current stand, and there has been no suggestion that others in the leadership are wavering.

The Role of the Church

The attitude of the workers and the regime will also be importantly affected by the Church's posture. Polish television played up Cardinal Wyszynski's appeal for calm on Sunday.

The Church, however, can hardly be considered a trusted ally. It probably does not want matters to get so out of hand that Gierek falls or the Soviets step in, but it also does not want to be viewed as opposing the aspirations of non-Communist Poles.

Moscow's Position

The USSR and Poland's Warsaw Pact allies also will have an impact on the outcome. Three Soviet officials commented separately this week that they were confident Gierek had taken the correct stance and would be able to end the unrest.

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Moscow's continued confidence in Gierek, its pre-occupation with its southern borders, and its continued pursuit of detente in Europe are powerful factors encouraging a restrained position. If the Soviets want to do more, they could increase exports of consumer goods and extend large hard currency loans. Moscow's hesitation reflects its own difficult consumer supply situation and the implicit message for other East European states that industrial unrest has its rewards.

The concern in Moscow about the Polish situation is reflected most directly in the jamming of Western broadcasts. The Soviet leadership expects Gierek to employ whatever force is necessary to crush the unrest, and it would attempt to install some other Polish leader to do the job if Gierek proved unwilling. Poles of all political persuasions appreciate this reality, and, even without Gierek's reminder earlier this week, it remains the major underpinning of stability.

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